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ABSTRACT

The 1989 Charlottesville Education Summit of the nation's governors resulted in the National Education Goals which describe six priorities (readiness for school; high school completion; student achievement; world leadership in science and math; adult literacy; and safe, disciplined, and drug free schools) for public schools to achieve by the year 2000. As originally written, the goals did not include a distinct role for higher education nor did they acknowledge the importance of teachers to their success. Policy makers have begun to address the omission and have proposed an additional goal that calls for teachers to "have access to programs for the continued improvement of professional skills." This digest highlights initiatives taken by the teacher education community in support of achieving the goals. For example, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education recast the goals to reflect the involvement of teacher educators by adding strategies for learning to accompany each goal; higher education institutions have shaped the original six goals into programs that can help prospective teachers. The digest concludes with short descriptions of new approaches being undertaken by schools, colleges, and departments of education within the framework of the six goals. (Contains 7 references.) (LL)

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ERIC DIGEST

MAKING THE GRADE: TEACHER EDUCATION'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

by

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Making the Grade: Teacher Education's Role in Achieving the National Education Goals

Elizabeth Foxwell

Background

The 1989 Charlottesville Education Summit of the nation's governors resulted in the National Education Goals, which describe six priorities for public schools to achieve by the year 2000. Educators across the country supported the Goals' high aims, yet also expressed reservations (*Voices*, 1991). As originally written, the Goals did not include a distinct role for higher education nor did they acknowledge the importance of teachers to their success (p. 26, 27).

Policymakers have begun to address the omission and have proposed an additional Goal that calls for teachers to "have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire such knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century," by the year 2000 (Taylor, 1993). This Digest highlights initiatives taken by the teacher education community in support of achieving the Goals.

What are the implications for teacher education?

Colleges of education recognize that new, collaborative methods are needed to enable teachers to reach the students of tomorrow and ensure every child's success (Guy, in press). Organizations such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Holmes Group, among others, are working to design standards to ensure comprehensive, quality teaching.

Former Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) Assistant Secretary Christopher T. Cross observed, "For student learning to improve, teacher learning must also improve" (Cross, 1991). The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) has called for funding professional development programs for teachers at the college level, conducting teacher education in clinical settings, and improving the provision of professional enrichment programs (SHEEO, 1991). Release time for teachers' professional development and universal recognition of teaching as a genuine profession could also contribute to successful attainment of the Goals.

How is teacher education responding?

Higher education institutions have shaped the original six Goals into programs that can help prospective teachers and their future students. In a 1992 survey, over 90% of more than 600 private colleges and universities were conducting eight or more programs related to the National Education Goals (Report, 1993).

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) recast the Goals to reflect the involvement of teacher educators by adding strategies for learning to accompany each Goal (AACTE, 1992, p. 13):

GOAL 1: Readiness for School
Strategy—All schools will be ready for children.

GOAL 2: High School Completion
Strategy—Schools and teachers will receive necessary support to engage all children in learning, including development of special programs for those most at risk.

GOAL 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship
Strategy—Teachers will be proficient in the subjects they teach and the pedagogies to teach them. They will be skilled in the use of assessment to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners.

GOAL 4: Science and Mathematics
Strategy—U.S. citizens will be first in the world in thinking skills and problem solving.

GOAL 5: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning
Strategy—Schools and businesses will join together to enhance workers' abilities, both in the classroom and beyond.

GOAL 6: Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-free Schools
Strategy—All children will be guaranteed a safe learning environment. To that end, every child in America will be taught by a fully qualified, licensed, professional teacher.

Are new approaches being tried?

Teacher educators must prepare qualified teachers for a new kind of classroom. Following are descriptions of projects undertaken by schools, colleges, and departments of education to meet the National Education Goals (AACTE, 1992).

GOAL 1: Colleges of education are fostering early literacy, developing collaborative services, providing intervention programs, and building teachers' skills in working with children from disadvantaged families.

Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, sponsors a therapeutic preschool classroom for abused or neglected children, including individualized instruction emphasizing school readiness skills. A mental health professional provides the children with daily counseling. Peabody College also administers the Tennessee Outreach Training Project, which offers information to programs serving young children with disabilities on best practices.

The Department of Teacher Education at Bradley University (IL) helps operate a program where at-risk children attend preschool four days per week. On the fifth day, teachers receive inservice training at the university or conduct home visits. Classrooms serve as field sites for early childhood education majors and for teachers requiring inservice training.

GOAL 2: Teacher educators have established linkages with secondary schools and other partners, enabling academically troubled high school students to attend college or vocational

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programs and exposing teacher education students to experiences that will arise in their classrooms.

To help rural disadvantaged students, the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University provides tutorials to at-risk 9th- and 10th-grade students to build math, language arts, and study skills. Marian College (WI) sponsors a mentoring program where education students work with elementary-grade students having problems.

GOAL 3: Teacher educators have initiated programs to build skills in multicultural areas as well as in rigorous academic subjects so that new teachers can challenge their students to reach their full potential.

Northeastern State University (OK) started a pilot program to aid in the transition of at-risk students from rural schools into middle schools. Courses in the Education Department at the College of St. Elizabeth (NJ) emphasize living and teaching in a pluralistic society and feature preservice opportunities to work with children of diverse backgrounds. Florida State University's College of Education developed new strategies to prepare teachers of children with limited proficiency in English.

GOAL 4: Teacher educators have established partnerships with businesses, schools, and representatives from other academic disciplines to help foster student interest in science and mathematics from a very young age. Increasing the number of women and people of color entering mathematics and science careers is also a priority. Efforts include improving teachers' skills in the use of technology in the classroom, linking them with industry, and designing inservice programs to strengthen their math and science knowledge.

Since 1976, Wesleyan College (GA), has sponsored "Expanding Your Horizons in Science and Mathematics" conferences for middle and high school girls and runs a math and science summer camp for middle school girls.

The Dayton Science Project of the University of Dayton's College of Education (OH) links public schools, professional associations, a museum, software publishers, research institutes, and local industry to redesign the K-12 science curriculum; develop a communications technology network between science and math teachers and students, industry leaders, and government staff; and create science content and pedagogy workshops for teachers.

GOAL 5: Higher education institutions have moved into the workplace and other community areas to promote literacy and lifelong learning. Projects include tutoring programs that pair prospective teachers with elementary students and on-site classes for workers featuring computer technolgy.

The University of Miami Student Literacy Project includes undergraduate education majors who tutor at-risk elementary school students. A program to improve the literacy skills of Sara Lee employees is operating with a partnership among North Carolina State University-Raleigh, the U.S. Department of Education, the corporation, and Forsyth Community College. Basic and job-related skills are emphasized in an in-plant instructional program; employees are granted release time to attend classes. A supervised learning lab is computer equipped.

GOAL 6: Colleges of education are trying to provide teachers with the skills to deal with the social problems they face in the classroom. Drug awareness programs, counseling skills, and resources are a few of the services offered in partnership with parents, administrators, and others.

Junior and senior education undergraduates at the University of West Florida participated in three pilot modules on drug prevention—classifications of drugs and ways to identify users; drug use history; and problems in monitoring school policy and introducing drug prevention education into the curriculum.

Conclusion

Achieving the National Education Goals will depend on teachers' abilities to meet great challenges, devise and use effective learning strategies, and work with many partners to enable all children to meet their full potential. Teacher educators are working to provide their students with the necessary skills to meet the demands of tomorrow's classrooms.

References

References identified with an ED number (documents) are in the ERIC database. Documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 700 locations. Documents can also be ordered through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service: (800) 443-ERIC. For more information, contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

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